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AUTHOR Colon, Maria, Comp.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

A class project undertaken in an English-as-a-Second-Language class is described and presented. Students participating in the project were union employees in a Manhattan electronics factory, and most were native Spanish speakers. The project's objective was to produce an illustrated book and tapes to document work and union experience in the factory, using the oral history process, and to, simultaneously develop student literacy skills and foster reflection and criticism about factory conditions. The resulting publication, entitled "The Life of I.E.H. People in Local 259," consists of a series of personal histories of workers and interviews of the chief shop steward, quality assurance control director, and two long-time company workers. Some photographs are included, but may not reproduce well. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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Maria Colon and Others

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ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
Advanced ESL Class, Local 259 UAW
1985-86

Teacher: Laura Gothowitz

Teacher's statement concerning the goals of this project:

"The advanced ESL class I am currently teaching is structured around an oral history project on the electronics factory where my students work. I had introduced the project to the class because I felt that the course materials should be directly relevant to their lives and concerns. The project has tried to give meaning and direction to the goal of "learning how to write", which was, in fact, high on the students' list of objectives at the beginning of the term. The project has also fostered reflection and criticism about conditions in the factory. I think that the project will help the students develop sound literacy skills, and simultaneously lead to analysis of and perhaps solutions to specific problems they have identified in the factory, and also to their greater participation and influence in the union."

Class population: The students in this class are Spanish speaking women workers who are employed in an electronics factory in Manhattan. The class is held twice a week in the factory lunch room, after work. There are eight students. Most of these women have worked in this shop for over 10 years, atleast some over 20 years.

Materials: Notebooks, pencils, pens, tape recorders and tapes. Acces to typewriter and xerox machine.

Objectives:
The objective of the project is the student production and disse of an illustrated book and tapes documenting work and union expe in their factory using the oral history process. The book will to the union, the education program for use as a text in other cla and to the Wagner Archives at the Tamiment Library, NYU.

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ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

ACTIVITIES

A. Oral History

1. The teacher introduces the Oral History project, explains the process and discusses the goals. (She/he may show examples of other oral histories.)

2. The students make a list of interview questions. The following topics are covered.

   -Migration to N.Y.;decisions,experiences,family
   -Previous Work experience
   -Jobs in the factory
   -Changes in production & working conditions
   -Union Activity
   -Health & Safety
   -Relations between co-workers and between workers and management.

   Students write their own paragraphs on the above topics.

3. Students arrange and tape interviews with co-workers and people the students feel can best contribute to the history of the shop,ie. shop stewards, supervisors, etc.

4. Students listen to the interviews, discuss the issues that arise from the interviews, and write a paragraph of introduction to these interviews. In these introductions the students are asked to not only write about their own experiences but to also respond to what was said in the interviews; making comparisons and analysis.

B.Research on the Shop:

This can be done through the interviews and/or through the use of periodicals, journals, annual reports. Topics include: the division of labor, type of business, strikes, ownership of business, profits & costs, etc.

C. Transcription, translation, editing. This process incorporates grammer, reading, discussion, vocabulary and writing. This work is done in pairs or groups.

D. Photographs: Collect historical photos from Local 259 and from co-workers, make xerox copies.

E. Compiling copies of the booklet; typing, proofing, layout, xeroxing.

THE LIFE OF I.E.H. PEOPLE IN LOCAL 259

COMPILED BY:

MARIA COLON
ALTAGRACIA CORDERO
HIPOLITA FIGUEROA
MARIA GARCIA
CARMEN GOMEZ
LYDIA GOMEZ
VIRGINIA MORALES
JUANITA RIVERA

ESL Level II CLASS

Ms. LAURA GOTHOWITZ, TEACHER

June 18, 1986

LOCAL 259 UAW English as a Second Language students at the Wagner Labor Archives, NYU.

INDEX

-Personal Histories

-Interviews with:

Ana Luisa Romero, Chief Shop Steward

Richard Figueroa,Quality Assurance Control Director

Rosa Corchado, worker with thirty seven years in the company

Dorothy Batiste, worker with over 35 years with the company

Personal Histories

I remember my past when I came from my country, Puerto Rico. I came to live with my friends in their apartment. I didn't have any family in the U.S.A. I wasn't working for the time being. I needed some help from my friends until I found a job. It was in the handkerchiefs factory. I worked there during the time of two or three months. Then later on I had my first baby and I couldn't work for five or six years in this company Industrial Electronic Hardware. My pay was twenty-six dollars a week. But in that time everything was cheap. Anyway that little bit of money that I used to get was enough. And then when I entered in the union I got a little raise. And I couldn't do better. And I got more benefits like holidays and other things.

HIPOLITA FIGUEROA

I started in my job twenty years ago. I love my work. I have so many friends in here. The best friend of my time is Carmen Gomez. She is working one floor down. I am working on the fifth floor. My boss is a very nice man. I am a machine operator. The name of my job is heat seal.

ALTAGRACIA CORDERO

I am a machine operator. The machine that I work with I don't like. I have to do it. I like the other machines, they're cleaner and better.

NOEMI RUIZ

My mother died in 1960 of diabetes. She was 49 years when she died. I miss my mother so much. Then five years later my father passed away. Both were living in this country. I have two brothers and three sisters. My little sister's living in Ohio. I love my older sister. My older sister brought us to this country. She is married and she has three sons.

VIRGINIA MORALES

My name is Maria Garcia. I am twenty four years old. I work for I.E.H. I work in inspection. I pick up the good pieces. I send the orders to the shipping department and the bad pieces to someone to repair. I like my job. This is my first job.

MARIA GARCIA

I am a machine operator. I make pieces. I take the first pieces and then I put together in the mandrel and I press the machine button to take the five wires. Then I put the end piece and I press the switch with my two hands. This is my job. And I do it many times during the day over and over again.

HIPOLITA FIGUEROA

I am a machine operator. The hour to start in machine is seven o'clock . First I put the machine hot, before I put the inner and front together, in the mandrel, and then I put the terminal in and I close the machine. Then I put the pin in the other part of the machine to make the rolling and I finish.

MARIA COLON

My name is Jose Perez. I am a Quality Control Inspector at Industrial Electronics Hardware. My responsibility here is to inspect all incoming material. I use a oslipper, micrometer and coordinate machine to do my job.

JOSE PEREZ

This is the work I do, assembly. I push the pins with my hands. When I finish the boss looks at it and says this is good or no good. I get to work at seven o'clock in the morning and leave at 3:30. I work in the factory about 27 years.

LYDIA GOMEZ

I came from Puerto Rico when I was fourteen years old. I started with Virginia's Social Security card because I didn't have the age for working. Then Virginia started work. She took the Social Security card. I quit from the job, I didn't have Social Security. I got married. I have two children and three grandchildren. Thanks very much.

JUANITA RIVERA

When I came to New York from Puerto Rico in 1951 I went to live with my parents. My second job in this country was in Industrial Electronic Hardware Corp. In that time the manager was Mr. Charles Nicchi and he took me for the job. When I stayed in the floor the forelady put somebody to teach me because I needed to learn how to make soldering. And after I did another job in the same factory. And we have a Union. The Local 259 was very good and is still good. The Union has many benefits for the people who belong to Local 259. For me it is the best Union.

MARIA COLON

I explain that my job before was very hard and the group of girls was very nice and good workers. I never had problems in this company. Now and before. Now I work easier than before. Because the machine I work is easier. I never had problems with my supervisor. I never had problems with my union. My union is a very good union. I don't have complaints with my union. Before the machine I worked on was very hard. Now I work easier with the automatic machine. I sit and the machine works alone. I only watch the machine. Nobody complains and I work easier.

Juanita Rivera

I started this job in 1953. I started over there in the night time between eleven to twelve o'clock. My job was to put contact in the casting. I had to make 26 boards every two hours. I did that operation all day. I worked in that for a long time and then they changed me to another thing. The name of my job is assembly. Right now I am the machine operator. I make pieces with pins and wires. I work eight hours during the day and now I have 31 years in this job.

Hipolita

My first job in Industrial Electronic Hardware Corp. was soldering. I was twisting wire by hand. And I was a machine operator, I cut wire in the machine. And I made another different kind of job. And now I work in the Sara's machine. This kind of work is better and cleaner to make. Sometimes I have trouble in the machine, and the other girls too. But that is nothing because in the floor we have two mecanics. And we have to call any of them to fix the machine.

Maria Colon

Local 259 is the union I belong to. I am thankful because the union gives us a lot of benefits. They have organized trips to Washington. They have also provided consumer education classes and now provide english classes. They elected a queen for the Spanish Parade, her name was Maria Lopez.

Once we had a strike and the union provided a lot of food for the people. The union was very good. They gave checks for the weeks we had lost. It was a lot of fun because some of the workers cooked chicken soup at the place where we met. We were striking for higher wages.

Carmen Gomez

Union meeting, early 1960's: Pres. Sam Meyers.

Interviews with Ana Luisa Romero, Richard Figueroa, Dorothy Batiste and Rosa Corchado

Ana Luisa Romero

Ana Luisa Talks about the different jobs in the factory. I think she is right, because she says the work before was very hard. Now it is easier. She explains that the people worked before like a family, because a long time ago, every worker had sense to teach another person. In my opinion, now some people are the same as people a long time ago. The only difference is that the new generation is growing up, and their feelings are not the same. A few years ago the third floor had many kinds of different jobs, including machines for cutting wire and machines for stamping numbers in the casting. There were many things to make by hand. I learned some of them. On that floor I was also a machine operator. That's why I learned more -- because I did many different jobs. I had to cut wire for the people who worked on the floor, and the other operators did the same thing. I am still working on a machine, the Sara's machine on the fourth floor, but it is easier to do the job.

Maria Colon

Ana Luisa Romero was born in Cayey Puerto Rico. She works in the factory for about 39 years. She is a very good person and helps everybody in the company. Now she is a personnel manager in the company. Before she worked in the first floor as a machine operator. She is a very active woman in the union. She is our Chief Steward and 2nd Vice President. We have a Credit Union and she is our president of the bank. We have a great help through this credit union.

Altagracia Cordero

I.E.H. in the early 60's. Rosa Corchado is the second from the right in the back.

I came to this country January 14, 1946 and when I arrived it was a very very cold day. I used to wear a very very cheap coat. It cost only $3.00 in Puerto Rico and it was a very old coat. I came to New York in a boat -- George Washington boat -- and I got very very sick while I was coming to this country. For five days I was very sick. When I arrived I was very very afraid because nobody was there. My cousin who lived in this country for many years, she didn't show to pick me up. Then I started crying because I was so young. I was like a mama-girl, I used to live with my parents all the time. I was afraid. I wasn't ready to be by myself in the pier. There was a lady in the boat that said, "Oh, I now Maria, your cousin. I'll ask my family to take you to her house when they pick me up." So I went to live in 211 St. and Madison Ave. in the Barrio Latino. I lived in the Barrio less than a year, then I moved over here to Mott St., first in the Spanish barrio and then to Little Italy. After that I loved this country. I cried a lot because I was alone and I missed my family a lot. But I found the country so beautiful, so beautiful that I decided to stay.

When I came to this country in 1946, I went to my first job, making pocketbooks, and I used to get, I think, $12.00 a week. It was in 28th St. and I got the job from my cousin. My cousin found the job for me. The bosses were nice. Then I found another job making slips and half slips at Lady Marlene. And I was so tiny that when the customers came and wanted to see how it looks in person the boss looked for me and he saied, "I have a small size" -- you know they always use the small size for the model. So he used to make me the model -- size 32 -- with the bra, half slip and panties, and then he gave them to me. I modeled for them. I was a bad girl then. Then I went back to Puerto Rico in 1947. I stayed there about eight months. I came back and my sister-in-law used to work here at IEH. She was the first Spanish girl that worked here. So she told me, "Go to IEH", and she gave me the address and she said, "they'll hire your right away." Then I came here and I was hired the same day. And my cousin told me, "tell the boss you used to get $34.00 where you worked before and like that he'll give you $34.00." And I told that to Seymour Hofferman the boss and he gave me $34.00. And I was making more money than anybody else. He was paying them $28.00, $26.00. And the people said, "How come you're making that much money?" And I said, "because my sister-in-law told me to say this so that's what I got."

The jobs we have now are very different because they are very easy. We have a lot of work to do with the new workers because the new people are also different. They are not the same as before. Before we used to be like a family, and the jobs were so complicated. They were all done on machines, and we had to teach everyother how to use the machines. The girls who used to work here paid attention to the person who was teaching them how to use the machine, they really listened. The new girl appreciated the help, and tried to learn as much as she could. This was good. It's not like that now. The new girls come and they want money. I'm sorry that I have to say that, but it's the truth. The new girls today are so different. And the jobs are so different, they are very very easy jobs. And they don't get dirty. The factory has changed a lot. It is nice and clean now. We have a refrigerator and a stove and cafe teria. Before we didn't have those things. Before the place was very dirty and we got very dirty. We had to work with oil, so we had to oil the machines. And now it is different. And what about the money? The money was also different. We made very little money before, about 75 cents an hour. The union got it raised now we start at $3.35 and they go up to $3.75. Some of them get it $3.50 or how ever it is that they go up to. There are people who have been here 12 years and they're still here so they make the difference is the job. The money not the people. The difference is everything. Most of the girls are beautiful and nice, but when it comes to work there's a different kind of atmosphere here.

The union was organized in 1951. Nicky Finn was the president. But let me explain the history of the union to you, how it got here. In 1945 we had the union in the tool and dye, because our local union is automobiles, they make automobiles and they have mechanics. So maybe they got confused with the mechanics in the tool and dye. In 1951, one of our sisters, Anne Taylor, she had a brother who was a salesman and belonged to one of the electrical [illegible] and under electrical [illegible]. [illegible] and then the supervisor Bruno Reganetto found out that we were making meetings to organize the job with another union, he came and he told our boss Seymour Hofferman, So Seymour Hofferman called us up and he said, "Why you try to bring another union over here?" I didn't know such English as that time, I tried to explain myself, but they misunderstood. Anyway, so they asked us to get together with the shop steward in this floor and the date, date of local 259 UAW. And I went around and I asked the people to become union members. So that's how I organized this union over here. That's how we become local 259 UAW members. It's very proud of it, and we should be proud of our local union.

Richard Figueroa

Richard works in Quality Assurance Control. He was born in the Barrio Latino on 116th St. He has a year and seven months with this company. After he came to IEH, he became Quality Assurance Control Director. Then the company offered him more money and he decided to stay. He says a connector costs a lot of money. The cheapest one costs a dollar. The pins are made of [illegible] the third floor. There are nine people [illegible] When connectors are bad, they repair them [illegible] very little. If people paid more attention [illegible] they don't have to be rejected. We have to be more careful an clean because the pins are delicate.

Virginia Morales
Carmen Gomez
Altagracia Cordero

This is an interview with Mr. Richard Figueroa. He is working for Industria Electronics Hardware for two years. His work is Quality Assurance. Mr. Figueroa speaks about the jobs in this factory. He say the job we make in this factory is very [illegible], Mr. Figueroa has eight people working with him. Four [illegible] h floor and the other work in the third [illegible] in the fifth floor is staking in the [illegible] ts and hardware. When the pieces are ready [illegible] ors. Mr. Figueroa is a gentleman, he is [illegible] th him four months in inspection. I learned a lot of things about inspection thanks to him.

Maria Garcia

I'm a Quality Assurance Director. I've been working in quality assurance for about 30 years, and I've been working at IEH for a little less than two years. Assurance means that I guarantee what the company says is true about the product, that it's a good product. I assure the customer. I make sure he gets what he wants.

The prices of the pieces we make vary. Keep in mind that all of these pieces are gold. What you see here is gold. And that's what makes it expensive. At IEH most of the parts are small, and they do basically the same thing. As you can see you have a pin, you plug it in. This acts like a fuse. And you put it into a machine and each of these little contacts is a different connection. So it's a very basic thing to any electronic circuit. These are connectors because they make a connection from one place to another.

Everything that's made here is called a connector -- just different types. They're used everywhere. Some are used for radio circuits, the ones we make for Raytheon and Zenith, and some for complicated computer circuits and for t.v. This factory used to make most of the t.v..connectors for every t.v. in the world. They were very very big. But then t.v.'s went out of business, nobody makes t.v.'s with that type of socket anymore, everything is transistorized. So they had to go into this. Now there's a difference, right, this is a lot more complicated to

make -- the connectors we make now -- there's a lot more technology involved in these than there is in t.v. sockets. Sockets are easy and, as you know, you've heard me scream it down these halls, quality is very importnat. The assembly work that goes into these connectors is more difficult, because it has to be more precise. Look at all these pins, that's 450 pins. Every single pin has to be in the right position. One pin that's off by 1/1.000, the connector won't fit. So that's why every hole has to be precise, the casting has to be precise, the pin size has to be precise, the measurements you make on here have to be very very precise. So if anything goes a little bit wrong we lose an entire connector, we can't sell it. That's why qualtiy in our firm is more important than before, cause the customers are looking at these things very carefully and if they see anything wrong they send the parts back to us as returns, and we don't want returns.

We used to make plugs for t.v., but t.v. changed, they don't make the tubes anymore, now they make what they call transistors, integrated circuits, IC's. That means that instead of having four things do something you have one thing, and they're all very small. So now they don't need sockets for plugs.. So this company started making connectors. A connector is like a fuse. No matter where you are or how fancy the machinery is, you need a fuse, it's almost like a lightbulb. No matter what you have, you need some sort of light. So that's why the connector business is so big, and why today we have so many orders. We can't fill all the orders we get. The integrated circuits are made in Japan or in Silicon Valley. All the other stuff, the military stuff, has to be done here. The U.S. government insists that you can't

build stuff that's gonna go into armaments overseas.

So you asked what exactly do I do. I'm like the chief cop. I have inspectors who are policemen, they check to see the work is good. I am also the chief representative between the customer and the company. Where there is a problem the customers talk to me, and I have to investigate the problem. That's why I have to take trips sometimes to see customers. Most of our customers are on the West Coast, in California and Texas.

To control the quality of the products we have a ticket system. When the product is being made, everyone who does anything to the product signs the ticket. So based on that we can trac back, if there's something wrong with the product continuously in a certain area, we can trace back to the individual or the process. Then each process in the product is monitored basically by the final inspection department. On a product like this, most of the problems are repetitive, maybe too much apoxee, bent pins, castings are cracked, pins are missing. We look at it visually, and under a ten power microscope. Then there are also some electrical tests that are done to the product, downstairs in the lab. Not all the products have to be tested electrically. You may have faulty material -- faulty plating or parts that are out of specification. Before a product is assembled, each part is inspected, and we have an incoming inspection department that inspects all the hardware, the plating thicknesses, the dimensions, including the casting. Then supposedly all these good parts are taken out to the floor and they're put together. If they find on the floor that some of these supposedly good parts are not good, then we go through a

process of purging these parts out, and getting back to our suppliers, letting them know what the problem is so we continue to get good parts.

We have nine people in the department including myself. And that's normal. Generally a quality control department has between five and ten percent of the total workforce, that includes the clerical personnel, what they call overhead personnel, and production. So here we have about 150 total.

My office is on the third floor. We have engineering on one side of the third floor, and quality assurance on the other, and the vice president of engineering has his office there. We have Moe who is the manager of engineering, we keep the blueprints on the third floor too, and all the bills for materials. The third floor is where all the brains design everything. Across from them you have quality assurance. We also have a lab where we do testing, and a stock room.

The people on the fourth floor make the hypertac contacs, they make them on those machines. The contac comes from France. It consists of two round sleeves with little wires inside. Then the pin goes inside and the wires overlap the pin and by touching the pin they make an excellent contact under all kinds of conditions. A normal contact, like in a radio, would rot or rust in bad weather conditions. But this kind of contact, the one you make here, can be sent to the moon and back, under all the vibrations, the heat, the cold, and still have excellent contact. The French came up with this contact, and we're using it because we have a patent on it, that gives us permission to use the contact. Several other companies have permission to use

it but IEH has been the one that makes it the best, we make a darn good contact, very good. And that's why we have so many customers.

In the basement they mold the casting. We call this the insulator. Molding is powder and they melt it down on a little steel plate and it takes the shape of the plate, a machine presses it in under pressure, you let it out, you open it up, it comes out hot as a dickens. And then the girl takes it right out, and puts it away. And that makes an entire part, all in one shot, the holes and everything.

The most important job in the factory is the job you people do, not the job I do, the job you do. If you do a good job, they don't even need me. I'm serious, it's not the president, it's not me, it's not all the bosses, it's the job you people do, cause the job you do is what makes this product. I don't make it, you girls make it.

Rosa Corchado

Dorothy Batiste

I.E.H. in the early 60's. Rosa Corchado is the second from the right in the back.

Rosa and Dorothy worked for a long time in this factory. When I started here, Rosa helped me do the work in this job. And then I met the other people like Dorothy. I was happy because I met so many people and I learned many jobs. And like that I had my job and I earned money to pay my rent and food. The ladies who are working before me like Rosa and Dorothy made me feel good.

Hipolita Figueroa

Rosa and Dorothy speak about when they came to this country for the first time, and for the first job. Rosa came to New York a very young girl, and the first job was in Industrial Electronic Hardware Corporation. Rosa is a nice person, she is working in this company about 37 years. And Dorothy is a very nice person too. Rosa said the job before is very hard compared to now, and the salary is not the same as now, and now the people are working easier, and the union provides plenty benefits. The union is a very good union.

Juanita Rivera

When I started work in 1959, on the third floor at IEH, one of the first people I met was Rosa Corchado. She taught me how to do the work and talked to me all the time. She and my sister and I ate together. Then Rosa introduced me to Dorothy Batiste, but Dorothy didn't work in the same floor. They used

to talk to me and asked me, "do you like the job?" But I told Rosa and Dorothy, "Maybe I'll stay here one year, or maybe I'll go back to my country where I have one daughter and she is five years old." And then Rosa told me, "Why don't you try and wait, at least two years." But I don't listen to anybody. I wanted to go back to my country. I wanted to see my daughter. She was in Puerto Rico with my mother. I was crazy to see her. Dorothy and Rosa were beautiful people to me when I came back again, and my sister too. They were good friends. When my boss gave me a transfer to another floor, I missed my friends. I had company in the new floor but they were my first friends and I missed them.

In the interview Dorothy and Rosa talk about the plant and about the first people who came to work here. They talk about the boss, the first boss Mr. Seymour Hofferman, and that the women who worked here were good people. They talk about what kind of people worked here and about the jobs they made.

Lydia Gomez

My name is Rose Coronado. I live in the Bronx. I started work here at 16 in 1964 and I was from Puerto Rico. I

was 17½ years old and since then I've been working here. When I started work here we made parts for radio and t.v. We didn't have to take a test exactly to work here, but they gave us exercises to prove how light and quick our hands were. There were so few people working we simply came in from the street, and they said, "you want to work" and we said, "yes", and so we came to work right away. No interview. When the factory began there were few employees. Later there was a time when we had more than 500 people. Now we don't have that many.

When I came to New York form Puerto Rico I had a very sad impression. When I arrived it was really cold, because I arrived in February. Imagine: you come for the first time from a country with a hot climate to such a cold climate -- the impression I had wasn't very good. But I stayed.

When I came to New York I had a lot of ideas. I had plans to study, I came here to study. But a woman who lived in the same building as my aunt asked my aunt if she wanted her to find me a job. And my aunt said "sure, if she wants." So I came here for a while to work, and I stayed for 37 years. The salary wasn't bad then because everything was so cheap. I sent money to my mother, gave money to my aunt and I had money in the bank. With $28.00 a week! The truth is, it was good to work here, and it still is. I don't have problems. I don't have problems with the factory or the supervisors or with my co-workers.

There have been problems, but they're not important. I've felt good here. And I've felt like I was with family. I have spent more time in the factory than in my house.

I think that when I started working here, we had better benefits than we do now. After six months they gave you a week of vacation. And they gave us all the holidays, including the Jewish holidays. And the supervisors were very good to us. I had a supervisor named Bruno who died. I had a forelady named Rosie,

Whenever a new person comes to work they always send her to me so I can teach her the work. I help everyone as much as I can, everyone who comes to my floor. Almost everyone I taught, they-did well in their work, they didn't have any problems. Sometimes we have to do the men's work too. Because their work isn't as hard. But there are jobs the men have that women wouldn't be able to do. But sometimes they give men work that the women could do. The men always earn a little more than the women.

What else do I want the union to do for us? To get us more money, and more benefits. We want more days off and vacation -- the three weeks we were supposed to get. For all the time we've been working here, we earn little money. But it's not their fault that we stayed.

The union helped us establish a credit union and this has helped us a lot. When someone needs emergency money, they loan it to us. It's different than a bank where you have to wait, and get references and fill out a lot of papers. Here, when you need a loan you fill out one paper and the next day you have the money.

The work is completely different now. Before everything was mostly machinery. Now it's mostly assembly, handwork. There are very few machines now. Before we did radio parts, so we had sockets that we put into the television or into the radios. Now everything is mostly computers, so it's really a different ballgame than before. I work much easier now than I did ten years ago because now you sit down and you load things, you load the pins. Then it was on a machine and maybe two girls would run a machine. Years ago it was three girls who would run a machine. And then we went on a vacation, and it was two, and it continued to be two girls on a machine. So you had to be like an octupus to try to keep the rails full up. While one girl operates the machine it is your job to see that the work goes off the machine properly as well as see that the rails were filled out. So it was a big difference. Now you sit down and you just load. In those days you had to actually run around the machine like you were on skates. The night girls made 25,000, the day girls wanted to make 50,000. And you were always batteling it out, not physically but mentally. Each shift was trying to do more than the other. Now I sit down and I load and its a breeze. And of course I don't think the relationship with the girls, with eachother, is as close as it used to be. I don't know why. Maybe it's because newer girls are coming in to the factory, and the older girls are going out. So we don't have that togetherness we used to have. If a girl had a problem then it was everybody's problem.

DOROTHY BATISTE

I came to New York when I was two years old. I went to [illegible] for eight years until I was about ten years old, when I returned to New York. My mother and father died in the thirties. I have a sister. I went to Julia Richmond High School. I also got married and lived in the Bronx. I had one son. My husband died in forty-nine. My son died in seventy-four. I worked in Bellvue Hospital, and then I came to Industrial Hardware.

Some of the women seem interested in knowing about Dorothy Young. Dorothy Young was one of the older working shop stewards. Dorothy was a very forceful person. She fought for things like union benefits. She was very strong in our retirement benefits. She was a person who could for instance...when the shop stewards met with the bosses it was a very gay dressed up affair. But when Dorothy Young came along they went in their smocks. They said, "Well, we're not going down there to show our bosom, we're going down there to get something for the people." And she was very strong in that. She was also very well liked. I think that in all the time I've been here she was the only person the factory stopped for. When she died, in '75, they stopped for a minute of silence. And I don't think they did that for anyone else. Except when Seymour's father died you had a day off. But other than that I think she was one of the more forceful workers we had among us.

Industrial Hardware in the fifties was very nice to work at. We were a family. Everybody became very close. I got to know Spanish speaking people very well, they became like my family. I enjoyed working here. Seymour Hofferman's father, who was a very short little guy, used to go around the factory and pick up whatever he saw on the floor and say to the girls, "Now this is a dollar, this costs money." We had a better relationship with our employer. You could always go to Seymour Hofferman with a problem. If he could help you you definitely would be helped. I myself went to him many times with problems. The gas bill had to be paid, the income tax had to be paid, and he would be understanding enough to help us out. We ran a machine that made parts for radio and t.v. We were very conscientious workers because at that time as I said we worked together, not only for yourself but for the company.

LOCAL 259 UAW students in class at Industrial Electronics Hardware where they work.

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